

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated 21/11/19



Mintaro



Mintaro stable



Mintaro butler's pantry



Mintaro stair hall



Mintaro entrance hall



Mintaro lavatory



Mintaro bathroom



Mintaro detached toilet



Mintaro from south



Mintaro stable



Mintaro from NW



Mintaro former working horse stable



Mintaro former woolshed



Mintaro dining room ceiling



Mintaro door furniture



Mintaro drawing room



Mintaro wallpaper scheme



Mintaro.jpg

Location

2137 MELBOURNE-LANCEFIELD ROAD MONEGETTA, MACEDON RANGES SHIRE

Municipality

MACEDON RANGES SHIRE

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2317

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO158

VHR Registration

June 13, 2013

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

Mintaro is an 1881 Italianate mansion with associated outbuildings in a landscaped setting near Romsey, 58 km north of Melbourne.

History Summary

The land on which Mintaro sits was part of a pastoral run taken up in 1844 by the Melbourne pioneer John Pascoe Fawkner. In 1860 the property was taken over by Captain Robert Gardiner, a Scotsman who had made a fortune in shipping, whaling, gold mining and grazing. In the late 1870s Gardiner commissioned the Melbourne architect James Gull to design a grand new house. In 1879 tenders were called for its construction and in April 1881 the *Australasian Sketcher* featured an engraving of the 'recently-completed' house, noting the contractors as 'Messrs Linacre, Parry, Bodkin, Adamson, Simpson, Hamilton and Hyde'. The interiors were designed by the distinguished German-born Melbourne decorative artist W Brettschneider. Following Gardiner's death in 1890 Mintaro was purchased by the Methodist Church and became the Mintaro Reformatory Home for Girls, where the girls were taught skills such as housework, cooking and laundry and dairy work. It was purchased in 1914 by Dr Crivelli as a family home. In 1934 the property was taken over by the Rea family, and after being used by the Army for barracks accommodation from 1941-46 remained in the Rea family until 2012.

Description Summary

The Mintaro homestead is a two storey rendered brick Italianate building with a two-storey loggia running across the front and a part way along two sides. The entrance porch on the north side has free-standing Doric columns and is surmounted by an impressive three storey tower with a belvedere. The two storey service wing to the west is lower and simpler in form. The elaborate and remarkably intact interiors are notable for their variety of surviving original finishes, including hand painted and printed wall and ceiling papers, painted stencilling and wood graining. Elaborate plaster mouldings and ceiling roses are present in many rooms as are marble fireplaces, light fittings, venetians, curtain rails and door and window furniture. All the plasterwork and joinery is marbled, wood-grained, gilded, stencilled or hand-painted and these are integral elements of the overall decorative schemes. All the different elements have been very creatively combined into interior schemes, with each room presenting a unified, richly decorative whole. The spectacular entrance hall features fluted Scagliola columns and Minton encaustic tiles. Opening off the entrance hall are the former drawing room, dining room, morning room and library, all with marble fireplaces and elaborate and largely intact decorative schemes. Three of the four large bedrooms upstairs retain their original wallpapers, with beautifully matched schemes with botanical and classical themes. Other notable intact areas are an original bathroom and a butler's pantry. Outbuildings comprise a small brick detached toilet, a brick stable and coachhouse, a woolshed and another shed which was once a working horse stable. The mansion is enclosed by a designed landscape providing a dense screen and windbreak on three sides. The original decorative gardens around the house have been largely lost, but the property retains a number of outstanding or rare species, including a very rare *Ulmus 'Viminalis'*, *Hesperocyparis benthamii*, *Hesperocyparis macnabiana*, *Pinus roxburghii*, and six *Juniperus virginiana*, all only known in a few other locations.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people.

How is it significant?

Mintaro satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

Criterion E Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

Why is it significant?

Mintaro is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

Mintaro is an outstanding and largely intact example of the mansions constructed in Victoria in the 1880s during the colony's Boom period. It reflects the prosperity of the colony at the time, and the money that wealthy individuals were prepared to spend to demonstrate their success. (Criterion A)

Mintaro is a rare and relatively intact surviving example of a Boom period mansion with an intact interior decorative scheme. Interiors at this time were extremely elaborate, but intact surviving examples are rare. Mintaro is one of the few houses where the original or early fabric of the decorative schemes for entire rooms survives and is still visible. Notable features include the variety of painted finishes such as stencilling, marbling and wood graining, intact wall and ceiling papers, original gas light fittings, door furniture, tiles and window dressings. The presence of intact cabinetry and decorative schemes for functional and servants' areas such as the bathroom and butler's pantry is also rare. (Criterion B)

The Mintaro planting features several trees rarely cultivated in Victoria. The *Ulmus 'Viminalis'* which is unusually grafted at about 2m, is one of only four known examples in Victoria, the other three all being in the Benalla Botanical Gardens. The perimeter windbreak around the property includes the rarely grown *Hesperocyparis benthamii*, *Hesperocyparis macnabiana*, *Pinus roxburghii*, and six *Juniperus virginiana*, all only known in a few other locations. The large number of *Juniperus* is unknown in any other planting in Victoria. The variety, size and maturity of species of *Quercus*, *Ulmus*, *Photinia*, *Morus*, *Crataegus*, *Laurus*, *Pinus*, *Cupressus* and *Hesperocyparis*, *Cedrus*, *Araucaria* and *Sequoiadendron* are significant. (Criterion B)

Mintaro is an outstanding and intact example of a Boom period country mansion, and demonstrates the principal features of such houses, which were designed to demonstrate the status of their owners. They were typically two-storeyed, in a Classical style, most often with a tower, had a picturesque form with asymmetric massing and planning, and elaborately decorated interiors. (Criterion D)

The intact decorative schemes are rare surviving and outstanding examples of the highest level of interior decoration available in Victoria in the 1880s. The designs, colour schemes and textures of the original materials and artwork provide a rare opportunity to experience the elaborate aesthetics of 1880s interiors. (Criterion E)

The Mintaro homestead complex sits within an outstanding designed landscape created from 1881 to the 1920s. The serpentine avenue of Monterey Pine along the driveway is entered through decorative gates and sweeps through an extensive parkland and dense perimeter planting. The perimeter planting is laid out to create an internal scalloped edge and includes a large variety of conifers and a few broadleaf and deciduous trees of contrasting foliage and colour. (Criterion E)

Mintaro is also significant for the following reasons, but not at the State level:

Mintaro is of local significance for its association with one of the prominent early landowners in the area, Captain Robert Gardiner, who owned Mintaro from 1860 until 1885 and with the architect James Gall. (Criterion H)

Permit Exemptions

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the

permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Landscape:

The process of gardening, including mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead shrubs and replanting the same species or cultivar, disease and weed control, mulching and maintenance to care for existing plants.

Repairs, conservation, and maintenance to hard landscape elements, paths and gutters, drainage and irrigation systems, fences and gates.

Removal of dead or dangerous trees and vegetation, works to maintain fire safety and to conserve significant buildings and structures and emergency works, provided a report is submitted to the Executive Director within 21 days.

.Replanting the same plant species which conserves the significant landscape character and values including specimen trees, avenues, rows, shrubberies, flower beds, and lawns, provided a list and plan is submitted to the Executive Director for approval within 21 days.

Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373-1996.

Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970-2009

Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or services, outside the canopy edge of significant trees in accordance with AS4970 and on the condition that works do not impact on archaeological features or deposits.

Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*

Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.

Theme

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates	1881,
Architect/Designer	Gall, James,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	2879
Property Number	

History

Monnegeetta is 58 km north of Melbourne between Sunbury and Romsey, in fertile agricultural land east of the Macedon Ranges. The name of the first settlement here was Monegatta, renamed Monegeeta in 1917 then Monegeetta c1960.

The grazing licence for 12,800 acres in the area was taken up by John Pascoe Fawkner in 1844, and was taken over in 1860 by Captain Robert Gardiner.

Gardiner was born in Scotland, ran away to sea at the age of sixteen and eventually made his fortune running cargo ships. He is thought to have made further fortunes whaling out of Portland, from the Victorian goldfields, and from sheep and cattle (at Berwick and Mt Gambier).

The following historical information is taken from the Macedon Ranges Shire entry for Mintaro in Hermes:

James Gall, architect, of 62 Collins Street East, called tenders for quarrying a quantity of building stone, Lancefield, in 1879 (*Argus*, 28/3/1879, p2). This must be for Mintaro, as building stone is on the site at time of his calling of tenders for building a residence for Captain Gardiner on his Lancefield Estate (*Argus*, 4/10/1879, p10), when he notes that sand, building stone and Hoffman's bricks were already on site. Gall was still calling tenders in the following year for 'building a brick residence for Captain Gardiner, Lancefield' or 'building a mansion' at Lancefield (*Argus*, 1/3/1880, p2; *Argus*, 3/4/1880 p11).

A splendid engraving by William Tibbits of Windsor of Captain Gardiner's country mansion 'lately built' for him upon his Mintaro Estate in Lancefield appears in an article in the *Australasian Sketcher* of 9 April, 1881. The writer hoped to dispel the belief that bark or log huts were 'the typical residence of an Australian Squatter.' The architect who designed Mintaro was confirmed to be James Gall. The contractors were listed as Linacre, Parry, Bodkin, Adamson, Simpson, Hamilton and Hyde. The tiles on the floors of the upper and lower colonnades, lower hall, loggia, etc. were noted to be manufactured to a special design by Minton, Hollins and Co. of Stoke-upon-Trent. The building was described in these words:-

The style of the architecture adopted is that of the semi-classic, the northern, southern, and western elevations being surrounded by a spacious colonnade built in the Doric Order below and the Ionic above. The main entrance is from the north, and the approach is fronted by an elegant porch leading to the loggia, and thence access is given to the hall, which is 11 feet in width and 51 feet in length, and gives access to drawing, dining and morning rooms, library and servants' offices. At the extreme end is placed the main staircase leading to the upper hall, and from thence to the various bedrooms, bathrooms, lavatories, etc. Both the lower and upper halls are most artistically ornamented, the ceiling of the former being supported by fluted Corinthian columns erected upon pedestals and the whole surmounted by a massively-enriched cornice which goes around the entire length and width of the hall ... The general external appearance is greatly enhanced by the addition of a lofty tower, which is in perfect harmony with the remainder of the edifice and adds considerably to the picturesque effect of the whole.' (*Australasian Sketcher*, 9 April 1881, pp 115-118).

An inspection of the building confirmed that the distinguished German decorative artist, W Brettschneider, was responsible for the fine interior designs, which include stencilling, marbling and wood-graining. Brettschneider's signature was noted on one at least of the tablets held by etched figures depicting the arts in the splendidly-decorated drawing-room. Advertisements for Brettschneider as an 'artistic house decorator,' paperhanger, gilder, etc., appeared in Melbourne and Victorian directories from the early 1880s until c1917. The official catalogue of the 1888 Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne (p 52) included an exhibit by Brettschneider, of 11 Flinders Street East, Melbourne: one room, ceiling and walls decorated in Renaissance style; ceiling panelled with medallions.

The use of the words 'artistically ornamented' in the *Australasian Sketcher* indicates that the decoration of the interiors was probably based on the fashionable Aesthetic movement which flourished from 1870 to 1900. Aestheticism was an approach to life based on the philosophy of 'art for art's sake'. It emphasised the importance of art above everything else and the pleasure to be found in beautiful things. Aesthetic interiors typically included images of fruit, flowers, foliage and blossoms often with classical themes, and the interiors of Mintaro are outstanding examples of this type of design.

A later description of Mintaro is provided in this Auction notice (*Argus*, 6/8/1885, p.3):

On instruction from Peter Robertson, Esq., the sale of Mintaro, at Monegetta (sic.) Mansion contains drawing room, dining room, breakfast room, library, billiard room, 5 large bedrooms, bathroom, lavatory, servant's rooms, kitchen, pantries, extensive cellars, etc. The reception rooms and hall are decorated in the highest style of art, etc. Photographs of the house and plans of property with the agents, Powers, Rutherford & Co. (in conjunction with Dal. Campbell & Co. and the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company).

During the 1880s and early 1890s Brettschneider's business address is also given in the directories in Elizabeth Street and at 99 Swanston Street. His private address is at 245 Coppin Road, Richmond.

By the turn of the century his business address is at 128 Russell Street and his private address at 82 Patterson Street, South Melbourne. He is listed in 1906 as 'decorator, signwriter, painter and paperhanger, gilder and embosser in glass.' By 1912 his business address is at 288 Lonsdale Street. Possibly because of his German origins, he is no longer listed as a decorator and signwriter from 1918. However, a W Brettschneider is listed as late as 1941 at 82 Patterson Street, South Melbourne.

The house is said to have cost as much as £29,000.

After the death of Gardiner in 1890 Mintaro was sold to R W Fitzgerald Moore. It was put up for sale again in 1895 and purchased by the Methodist Church for £5500 for use as the Mintaro Reformatory Home for Girls. The girls were taught housework, laundry work, cooking and dairy skills.

Further details are given in a later sale notice, in the *Argus* 27 February 1903 (though it does not appear to have changed hands at this time), which noted:

The Mintaro house is a large two-story mansion, of excellent design, with tower, verandah, and balcony, all tiled with ornamental tiles; containing 15 main rooms - drawing room, 18ft. x 24ft.; dining room, 18ft. x 26ft.; bedroom, 18ft. x 26ft.; bedroom, 18ft. x 24ft. besides billiard room, conservatory, gas house, gasometer, meat house, servants' quarters, stable, coachhouses, &c.

The mansion house and buildings were erected by the late Captain Gardiner for his own occupation in 1882, regardless of cost, and all are faithfully built, of excellent design, splendidly finished, and artistically decorated; all in a good state of repair, standing on a fine commanding position, close to the Monegetta railway station, on the Lancefield line, 36 miles from Melbourne, with a fine view of the surrounding country; an excellent climate, almost similar to Macedon, the altitude being 1,362ft. above the sea, and the average rainfall 33in. The house and grounds, about 12 acres, are judiciously laid out in plantations of choice trees, shrubs, flower, vegetable, and fruit garden, all supplied by an abundant supply of beautiful water laid on by iron pipes from the Running Creek, which runs through the back of the property and is never-failing. The whole forming one of the largest, finest, and most convenient gentlemen's residences in Victoria.

In 1914 the property was sold to Dr Crivelli as a family home. His two sons were involved with the Scout movement, and there are a number of photos of them and their scout friends in the SLV collection.

In 1934 the property was purchased by Percy Rea for use for fattening sheep from the Riverina during dry years, and until 2012 was owned by the Rea family. Following Percy's death in 1940 the house was inherited by his widow Ester, but in 1941 was taken over by the Army for use as barracks. The Army also compulsorily acquired a large part of the Mintaro land, which is now the Australian Government Monegetta Proving Ground Complex. Ester Rea and her sons returned to the house in 1946, and her son Derek continued to live there until his death in 2010. Some restoration work was carried out in c 1960s, but the house suffered considerable damage in the following decades with the failure of parts of the roof.

Plaque Citation

Designed by James Gall and completed in 1881 for Captain Robert Gardiner, this Boom-period mansion is outstanding for its elaborate and largely intact interior decorative schemes, which were designed by decorative artist W Brettschneider.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion

Mintaro satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history
Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history
Criterion C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history
Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects
Criterion E Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

Mintaro is also significant for the following reasons, but not at the State level:

Criterion H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history

Extent of Registration

1. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 2317 held by the Executive Director, being all of Lot 1 on PS642347
2. All of the buildings, including fittings, fixtures and appurtenances, marked B1-5 and features marked F1-F5 on Diagram 2317 held by the Executive Director

General: The trees and landscape

B1 House

B2 Stables and coachhouse

B3 Toilet block

B4 Shed (Working Horse stable)

B5 Shed (Woolshed)

F1 Iron entrance gates and posts

F2 Picket fence

F3 Driveway

F4 Underground tank

F5 Underground tank

[Victoria Government Gazette G 24 13 June 2013 p.1268]

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>